

Deconstruction of Penteng in Order to Preserve Balinese Gamelan Ensemble

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Abstract

Penteng was one of the instruments as well as the Balinese *gamelan* ensemble in the area of Karangasem (eastern Bali). *Penteng* instrument was easily distinguished when it was compared to other types of instruments used *gamelan* ensembles that can be sorted out in terms of shape, how to play, and how to make sounds or tones. The existence of *Penteng* instrument was very apprehensive, because there was little public interest to learn and make *Penteng* instruments. From these concerns, important steps were made to deconstruct *Penteng* instruments, to create *Penteng gamelan* ensembles (*barungan*, Bali), and then to present *Penteng* songs (*gending*, Jv). These three steps were expected to result in a better existence of *Penteng* instrument in the future. This activity was using the theory of deconstruction developed by Jacques Derrida, namely dismantling the quality of *Penteng* instrument's material and construction. Data was obtained by observation, interviews, and literature studies that could be used to deconstruct *Penteng* instrument, to create *Penteng* ensembles, and to present *Penteng* songs through various processes.

Keywords: *Penteng* instrument, deconstruction, *Penteng gamelan* ensemble, *Penteng* musical works

1. Introduction

Art was one element or part of the culture owned by the Indonesian. It was a nation rich with cultural diversity, because each region had a culture and dynamics of life that varies according to the dynamics of the community. One of the Indonesian treasures was the tradition arts that lived and thrived in the culture bubbles areas in Indonesia such as Bali. With the open flow of communication, information, and globalization, there would always be the 'highlighted' ones, and on the contrary there would always be the 'marginalized' or 'cornered' ones among traditional art. As disclosed by I Wayan Madra Aryasa in his *Perkembangan Seni Karawitan Bali*, compiled in 1976/1977, in Bali there were four types of extinguished *gamelan* ensembles. Those ensembles were namely: *Lanjang Gilak gamelan* ensemble, *Madura Satukad gamelan* ensemble, *Turasa gamelan* ensemble, and *Gelunggang gamelan* ensemble. It was expected that this *Penteng gamelan* ensemble would not suffer the same fate as the four *gamelan* ensembles mentioned before.

Folk art was one of the greatest inheritance forms that had the noble values of our predecessors. It was right for us as the next generation to preserve folk art. The word 'preserve' was often defined as preservation. It seemed that understanding was not in line with what was expected, so it could disadvantage us. Conservation should be interpreted as a dynamic action that was always present. With the current nature, folk art would still be sustainable because it developed according to its time.

Bali was a relatively small island compared to other islands such as Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Papua, and Kalimantan. Although the Island of Bali was tiny, but it had cultural potential including artistry, especially *karawitan* (Javanese term for *gamelan* ensemble) which was very dense both in terms of quantity and the type of *gamelan* ensemble. Based on author's inventory, Bali had 43 *gamelan* ensembles which each had or used different instruments in terms of size, materials, and shapes. One of the instruments in Bali was *Penteng* instrument.

Penteng instrument was the only form of string instrument used in folk arts, especially in Bali's *gamelan* ensemble, which experienced a very apprehensive life. *Penteng* was a specific musical instrument of Karangasem Regency. *Penteng* had reached its golden age in the final days of Karangasem Kingdom. Until the 1980s this instrument could still be found in art performances. But a few years later, the existence of *Penteng* began to disappear, because the artists died plus the presence of modern art increasingly crush the existence of traditional art.

Penteng was also the name of one of the *gamelan* ensembles that lived in Karangasem (eastern of Bali). The name of the ensemble was taken from the name of the instrument used in the *gamelan* ensemble, which was *Penteng* instrument that had distinct characteristics in the form and the way to play it. *Penteng* instrument was a wooden (board) box-shaped instrument using nine strings commonly used in guitar instruments. The nine strings were the same tune, six strings of size 2 or 3 were placed on the side while the other three strings were size 4 or 5 (relatively larger in size) placed in the middle (interview with I Wayan Rai, 30 April 2018).

The instrument had a section used to determine the tone according to its needs. *Penteng* was played by picking the string, using a pick (*pengotek*, Bl) made from turtle or oxenskin. Player pressed the button to set the desired tone. Each *penteng* instrument had buttons called the keys (*pengojet/pekocet*, Bl) that its tone had already

been set. With so many buttons used in *penting* instrument, it could produce *slendro* (five notes scale) and *pelog* (seven notes scale) tunes. *Penting gamelan* ensembles had a repertoire, but the use of *slendro* and *pelog* tunes did not rule out the possibilities in presenting song of other *gamelan* ensemble like *Angklung*, *Gong Gede* (*Pegongan*), and *Jogged Bumbung* (*Pejogedan*). According to I Wayan Rai, in the area of Karangasem, *Penting gamelan* ensemble was used in *Dewa Yadnya*, *Manusa Yadnya*, and *Pitra Yadnya* (*Ngaben*) ceremonies. In *Dewa Yadnya* ceremony, *Penting gamelan* ensemble performed was *Pegongan*, in *Manusa Yadnya* ceremony (marriage) performed music for *Pejogedan* or *Macekeprung*, and in *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony *Penting gamelan* ensemble performed *Pengangkungan* (interview with I Wayan Rai, April 30, 2018). *Penting gamelan* ensemble was an ensemble used to perform 'sitting music' (*petegak*, BI). It was the kind of instrumental music piece to create peaceful atmosphere. But in its development the *gamelan* ensemble was used to accompany *Genjek* art performance. *Genjek* was the kind of traditional flirtatious dance in Bali.

Observation results in Karangasem area indicated that the existence of *Penting* instrument was very alarming because there were only two craftsmen left there, named I Wayan Rai and Ida Bagus Panji. Both craftsmen lived in Amlapura Town, Karangasem. They were about 76 years old, so the hearing sensitivity and their energy had been greatly reduced, whereas in the making of important instruments it was necessary to have hearing sensitivity to tune the strings used on the instrument.

2. Deconstruction of *Penting* Instrument

Given the background of the existence of *Penting* instrument and *gamelan* ensembles as described above, the steps taken in deconstructing *Penting* instrument and *gamelan* ensembles were by using deconstruction theory. Deconstruction was an intellectual strategy or understanding model developed by Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is a rejection of truth and logos itself (in Piliang, 2010: 121-123). The meaning of deconstruction in general was the action of subject that dismantled an object composed of various elements that were worth dismantling. Based on Derrida's deconstruction theory, this study was expected to dismantle important instruments in the hope of producing something better. In this case it was expected to resulting in an important instrument that had better quality than it was before. The steps taken were as follow.

Looking at existing *Penting* instrument, it was necessary to give attention and special touch, especially in terms of materials quality used in instruments. The quality of *Penting* instrument was constructed by material elements, both ready-made (store-bought) and self-made materials. The material elements consist of wood for the body of the instrument, strings as the sound source, string regulator to determine the tone according to the required tone; spring used to give pressure required for the strings, keys associated with the strings pressures, the strings buffer and the stranding support base where its existence was related to sound proofing. With the improvement of the quality of various materials, it was expected that the sound quality produced by *Penting* instrument could be improved. The essential elements of the deconstructed *Penting* instrument were as follow.

Materials quality improvements

Body (*bantang*, BI) instrument body simultaneously functioned as a resonator, initially made from board of Kalimantan wood, then replaced with the use of board material from teak or sonokeling. Both types of wood had a improve the shape of *Penting* because of the wood fiber types. *Bantang* meant an instrument frame that was still plain. The word *bantang* was usually associated with the word *gending*, *tabuh*, and *kendang* so it became *bantang gending*, *bantang tabuh*, and *bantang kendang* (Sukerta, 2009: 39), and in this case it was body of *Penting* instrument (*Penting's bantang*).

String regulator that was acting as a tone tuning device needed to be upgraded in the hopes of reducing the possibility that the strings change or move so that it changed the tone that had been set. In addition in terms of appearance, this action was intended to make the instrument more interesting to look at.

String buffer material originally made from aluminium, and then replaced with a buffer made of fiber. Replacement of this string buffer tool was done with a special purpose, which was expected to muffle the sound produced from the string each *Penting* instrument used two string buffers of equal size and shape and mounted on the top and bottom of the instrument.

Initially the base of the string buffer was made of aluminum then replaced with a wooden buffer. The replacement of string buffer base was done in order to muffle the resulting string sound. Each instrument used a single strap base that was located on the bottom of the instrument.

Strings holder located on the bottom of an important instrument originally made of aluminum then replaced with a wooden string holder with a more attractive shape. The strings holders' material was replaced with wood with a reason to adapt to the wooden *Penting* instrument body. In addition, replacement intended to muffle the sound produced by the *Penting* instrument.

The strings suppressor were originally made of iron. Then, in order to deconstruct this *Penting* instrument, the strings suppressor was replaced with stainless steel in the hope that it would not experience corrosion, also to

feel smooth when the strings are pressed.

Pick served to put the fingers when making a tone. Initially (before the instrument was deconstructed) the tool was made of old coins affixed to the pick. Then, in order to deconstruct, the pick was replaced with wood of a similar shape. There were several reasons for the replacement of form of *Penting*'s pick; the difficulty of finding materials, the expensive price of old coins, in order to avoid dependence on solder material or pick connectors made of brass material with wire presses of iron material, in terms of shape or appearance to adjust between pick with *Penting* body made of wood.

The outskirts of the instrument's hole at the beginning (the old instrument) were encircled with aluminum, while the hole on the deconstructed product was not encircled with aluminum. The circle on the hole only served as an accessory or decoration that did not affect the sound quality obtained.

Changes in inner spring structures were done in order to deconstruct this in the hope that the keys were attached stronger between spring and the strings suppressor. During this time on the old instrument, the inner pear was often loose, so it would disturb the sound produced by the instrument.

The transformation

This activity there were two forms of changes in *Penting* instrument, namely the top of instrument's upper body that made of wood and the buffer of instrument's upper body that made of iron.

Changes made to the upper body of the instrument. This change was done to be more in line with the form of the main body, in the hope that the instrument was more interesting to look at. For more details check the picture below.



The old upper body of the instrument (left) and the new upper body of the instrument (right). The changes done on upper body buffer; this change was only done on the shape not on the material, in the hope that the instrument would be looked more attractive. The four supporting angles (two lower corners, two upper corners) are equated with the corners of the instrument body.

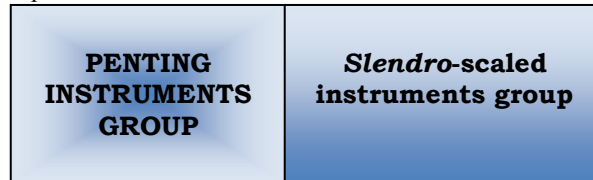
Creating *Penting* gamelan ensemble

Based on researcher's observation result, it was concluded that the instrument had not had a permanent ensemble. Such instrument was often used in other gamelan ensembles. Under these conditions, the researcher provided a new form of *Penting* gamelan ensemble by adding another instrument that supported the realization of a more prominent *Penting* musical. According to I Wayan Rai (1998) that musical elements are things that directly relate to elements of music, for example: tone, rhythm, tempo, structure, and ornamentation (*pepayasan gending*, Bl). Edi Sedyawati (1993-1995: 79) also gave musical insight that musical is a value contained in the work of music. Musical value is an intrinsic value and a companion value. The intrinsic value is the musical value, while the accompanying value is in the elements that follow it, such as libretto, illustrative motion, or dramatization. The core of musical value in a work of music lied in its elements, such as; sound sources, sound quality, scales, modulation opportunities, harmony, rhythm, melody, and musical formulas that could be arranged in a limited way.

Penting could present song at least two scales, they were song in *slendro* scale and song in *pelog* scale. To support *Penting* instrument in full and complete song performance then other types of instruments (other than *Penting*) were added, with musical consideration. The creation of *gamelan* ensemble was done gradually. This creation began with the use of different types of *slendro*-scaled instruments in gamelan ensembles, namely *Jublag* and flute instruments (*Suling Titir* and *Kekebyaran*), as well as other instruments that work on rhythm such as the *Tawa-tawa* and *Klenang* instruments. In addition, the song would use *Gong Pulu* instrument. On the next steps, the instrument type began to be adjusted to the *pelog* scale, to create the complete song ensemble.

Instruments layout

One *gamelan* ensemble was planned to be formed into three groups of instruments, the first group was *Penting* instrument, the second was the instruments group that apply the *slendro* scale, and the third group was a group of *pelog*-scaled instruments. Each group was arranged in a row. But this step would only use two groups of instruments, namely group of *Penting* instruments and group of rhythm and melodic makers that used a *slendro* scale. For more details see the picture below.



Conclusion

The discussion above could lead to the conclusion that *Penting* instrument needed to be preserved because the enthusiasts and makers were relatively few compared to other types of instruments in Bali. This conservation effort applied deconstruction theory by performing steps, namely: deconstructing material and shape of *Penting* instrument, so it would be able to improve instrument's sound quality, create *Penting gamelan* ensemble to be offered to society. The *Penting* ensemble could present songs in *slendro* and *pelog* scales. The last step was creating songs to be added to the repertoire of *Penting gamelan* ensemble. By doing these three activities, it was expected that the life survival ability of *Penting* instruments and ensembles would increase.

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